AKIRA 6™

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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

CHAPTER 6

MY FRIEND, MY ENEMY

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

The year is 2030. The world is rebuilding from World War III. In **Neo-Tokyo,** plans are being made to hold the next Olympics in the "old city"—where, thirty-eight years before the first of the bombs fell.

Kaneda and his friends, teenage delinquents, make an unauthorized motorcycle run into the old city to check out the old site. They encounter a terrified child, known only as **Number 26,** possessing extraordinary telekinetic abilities. During the encounter, the paranormal boy gravely injures **Tetsuo,** one of Kaneda's close friends. Then he vanishes.

The next night, at **Harukiya,** a tough local dive, **Kaneda** attempts, unsuccessfully, to pick up a newcomer **Kay.** In fact, she and her companion **Ryu,** are part of an underground resistance group dedicated to learning what is happening in the old city and putting a stop to it.

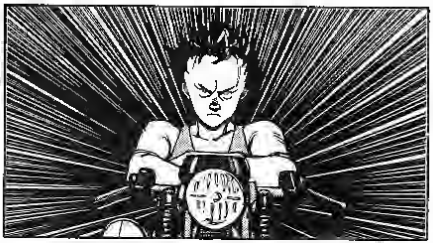
Trouble ensues, and both delinquents and resistance fighters again encounter **Number 26. Ryu** attempts to reassure the paranormal boy, but **Kaneda** is anxious to punish him for injuring **Tetsuo.** As they argue, mysterious soldiers pursuing **Number 26** reach the scene, armed and ready. A firefight results.

Then the ominous **Colonel** in charge of the covert operation appears with a secret weapon—**Number 27,** a crippled paranormal child named **Masaru. Masaru** astonishes the resistance fighters by addressing **Number 26** as **Takashi.** Kay and Ryu had previously assumed that **Number 26** was the Colonel's ultimate weapon—the as-yet unseen paranormal giant code-named **Akira.**

Kaneda provokes a crisis by pretending to threaten **Takashi,** who is exhibiting symptoms of drug withdrawal. **Takashi** responds with telekinetic upheavals. **Kaneda** is again separated from the resistance fighters, but he manages to intercept and hide a pill meant for **Takashi,** who is recaptured by the Colonel's men.

The next day **Tetsuo**—who following his accident was taken

Kaneda **Tetsuo** **Kay** **Ryu**



to a hospital by soldiers—reappears in school seemingly all right. However during Tetsuo's treatment the **Colonel** has learned that the delinquent has great psychic potential.

Kaneda has a girlfriend in the school infirmary analyze the drug intended for **Takashi.** It is similar in substance to pills **Kaneda** and his friends take but unbelievably concentrated and powerful.

Eager for action **Kaneda, Tetsuo** and their gang head out for a rumble with their chief rivals—the vicious **Clown** gang.

A member of the **Clowns** comers and begins to beat **Tetsuo. Kaneda** and the rest of his friends rescue **Tetsuo,** who astonishes them first by displaying an uncharacteristic bloodthirstiness, and then by challenging Kaneda's authority.

Determined not to let a new human weapon escape him the **Colonel** goes to the school the next day to collect **Tetsuo.**

Under the treatments of the Colonel's chief medical officer **Tetsuo** begins to exhibit powerful psychic abilities and to undergo great pain.

Meanwhile **Kaneda,** trying to spy on the Colonel and learn what is happening to **Tetsuo,** re-encounters the members of the resistance, and is brought back to their headquarters. Questioned by **Ryu,** he denies all knowledge of the stolen drug.

Kiyoko, another of the psychic children under the Colonel's control announces to her master the disastrous news that **Akira**—who is asleep and expected to remain so for some time—is going to awaken in the near future. Meanwhile at the resistance hideout, **Kaneda** encounters a ghost-like

Takashi **The Colonel** **Masaru** **Yamagata**

apparition of himself, shouting Akira's name.

When soldiers enter the resistance hideout in force, **Kaneda** and **Kay** manage together to escape to **Harukiya**, where the bartender agrees to shelter them.

Overwhelmed by pain, **Tetsuo** breaks out of the Colonel's installation leaving death in his wake. When he is cornered alone in the street by the **Clown** Gang **Tetsuo** uses his burgeoning powers to slaughter those who oppose him. He takes control of the gang, letting them live in return for the massive amounts of drugs required to stave off his agony.

Kaneda, anxious to recover the motorcycle he left behind when he "joined" the resistance, eludes **Kay.** He is nearly caught by soldiers in the underground tunnels. **Kay** gets to the lost bike first, and when **Kaneda** joins her, they are able to escape back to the safety of **Harukiya**.

Later, **Ryu** orders **Kay** to stay close to **Kaneda** and keep undercover. But those plans are complicated by the arrival at the bar of **Yamagata** and Kaneda's other friends. **Kaneda** is amazed at their tales of Tetsuo's new powers and bloodthirstiness.

Meanwhile **Ryu** meets with **Nezu,** a resistance leader and they share new evidence on the scale of the **Akira** project.

A spy from the Colonel's organization learns of the **Harukiya** hideout, but he is caught and left for dead by a resistance fighter.

Ignoring their status as fugitives **Kaneda** eludes **Kay** and he and **Yamagata** lead all of the local street gangs on a massive all out attack to stop **Tetsuo** and the **Clowns**.

Nezu **Kiyoko** **Bartender** **Clown**

I COULDN'T REALLY SAY...
WE GET SO MANY KIDS IN HERE...
ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER
THEY COME IN MAYBE ONCE ... MAYBE TWICE ...
AFTER A WHILE WHO CAN TELL ANY OF EM APART

YOU GET WHAT I'M SAYING ?
DO YOU HAVE A LIQUOR LICENSE?
SURE I DO EVERYTHING HERE IS TOTALLY LEGITIMATE.
AND IT'S UP TO DATE?
SEE FOR YOURSELF. NOT DUE FOR RENEWAL FOR A LONG TIME, SO I'M IN GOOD SHAPE
flik
HEY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!

OF COURSE YOU'RE AWARE THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO PASS ANOTHER INSPECTION BEFORE YOUR LICENSE IS RE-PLACED.
YOU DIRTY SON OF A --!
hhsssss
THIS IS ALL SO POINTLESS. WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN CLOSING YOU DOWN.
YOU CAN SOLVE ALL YOUR PROBLEMS BY SIMPLY TELLING US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW.
SKREEEE

VRRRRRN
GO SCREW YOURSELVES!
ZZZZ
!
EEYAAGH!!
KRASH
YIII-!
BACK THE OTHER WAY!
OH, MAN...

SUCKERS!!
VRRRRN
HUNH?
TETSUOOO!
THAM
!
SKREEEEEEE

SCHRAG!
BEEP
HA-HA-HA-HA!
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT, YAMAGATA!
SKRE EEEEEEE
GASP
GASP

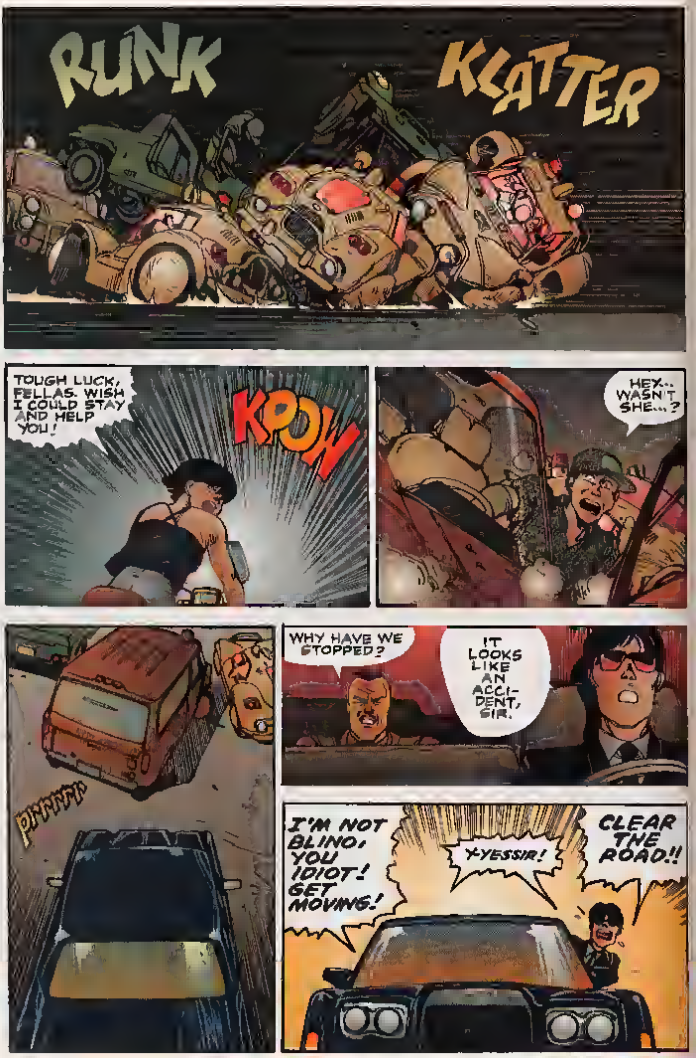
VRRRRRN
28
HERE GOES!
WONG
KLONK
VRRRN
COME BACK HERE!

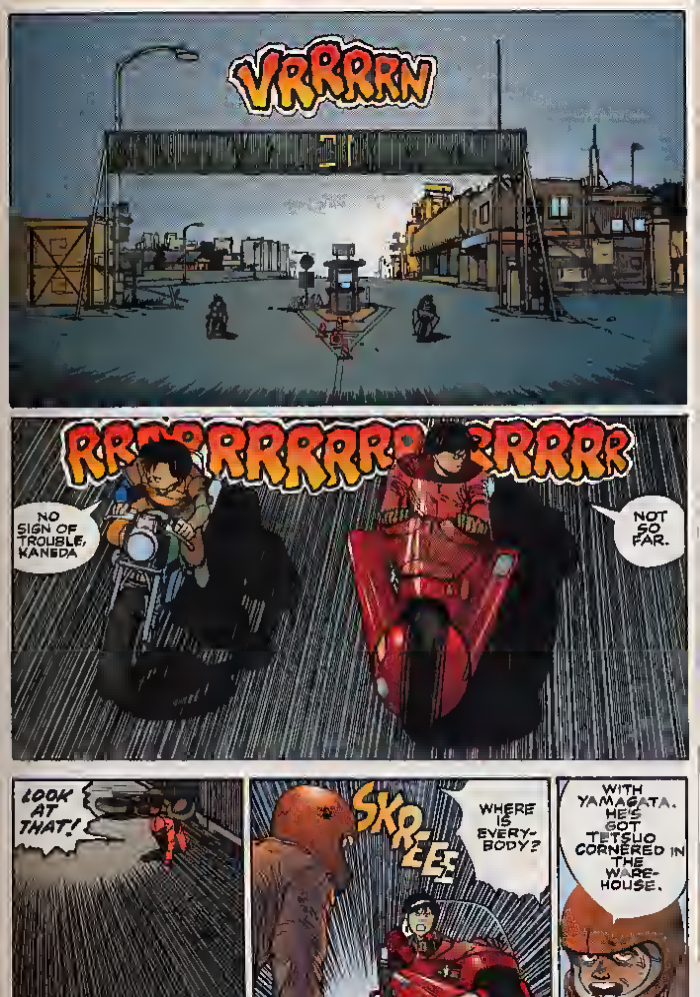
KANG
8
SKREEEE
KRRRRRRRR
!

KLANK
OKAY, TETSUO... YOUR ASS IS OURS!
!
FWOOM
H-HEY...
NOW!
WWRRRRRRR

WWRRRRRRRRR
KLAK
RRNNNNK
YAAAH-!

HHRMMM
HHRMMM
SQUEEE
:HLP!:
KRUNK
YALEE!


RUNK
KLATTER
TOUGH LUCK, FELLAS. WISH I COULD STAY AND HELP YOU!
KPOW
HEY... WASN'T SHE...?
PRRRT
WHY HAVE WE STOPPED?
IT LOOKS LIKE AN ACCI-DENT, SIR.
I'M NOT BLIND, YOU IDIOT! GET MOVING!
YESSIR!
CLEAR THE ROAD!!


VRRRRN
NO SIGN OF TROUBLE, KANEDA
NOT SO FAR.
LOOK AT THAT!
SKREE
WHERE IS EVERY-BODY?
WITH YAMAGATA. HE'S GOT TETSUO CORNERED IN THE WARE-HOUSE.

BLAM
BOOM
KABLOOM

BUMP
THUD
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
GASP
PUFF
PUFF
EEYAGH!!

SKREEEEE!
EEEEEEEEEE
KANEDA, BE CAREFUL!
DON'T WORRY, I'M GETTING TO BE AN OLD HAND AT THIS.

NICE TO SEE YOU, KANEDA. YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.
OH, I CAN'T COMPLAIN. HOW 'BOUT YOU? YOU SEEM A LITTLE PALE.
I HAVE A LITTLE HEADACHE.
I HEARD YOU'D LOST YOUR MIND.
HAH.
STILL HAVEN'T CHANGED, HAVE YOU, KANEDA?
STILL THE BIG MAN, ALWAYS HAVING TO RUN EVERY-THING!

JUST LIKE WHEN WE WERE KIDS?!
NO MATTER WHAT WE DID, YOU ALWAYS HAD TO BE IN CHARGE!
I HEAR YOU'RE RUNNING SOMETHING NOW, TOO--
--A CESSPOOL.
KANEDA!
WHAT?!

HUNH--?
WHAT'S THAT YOU HAVE THERE?
SHOOT HIM, KANEDA! SHOOT HIM!!

FINE!
IF YOU WANT TO SHOOT ME, GO AHEAD!
...
YOU CAN'T DO IT, CAN YOU...
...BECAUSE I'M YOUR FRIEND...
!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!

...ISN'T THAT RIGHT...
...KANEDA?
!
!
YIPE!

BASH
DAMN!
!
KRESH
YAGCK!
KLAK

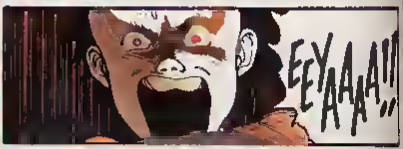
KANEDA!!
skrit skrit
GAS
GAS
...UHNH...
MY HEAD
MY
YOU BASTARD
...
SKRK
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF

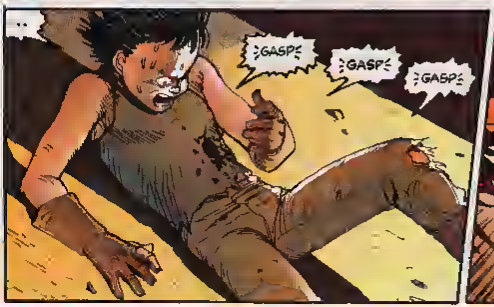
TE...TETSUO...
;GASP;
;GASP;
YAMASATA!!
....YOU MOTHER...
YOU'RE GONNA DI!!!!--
AAIEE!!
!

YA...
SPLAT

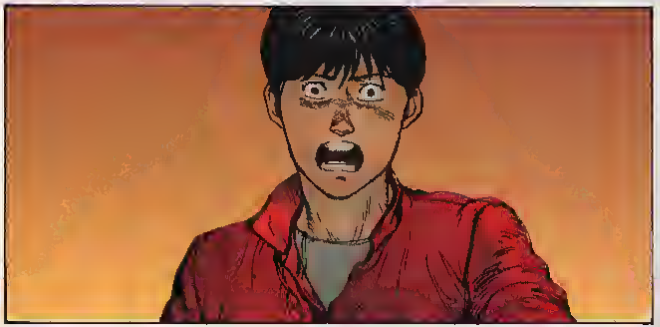
YAMAGATAAA!!!
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF

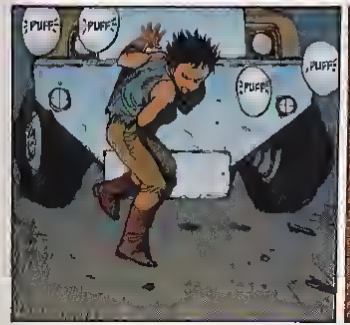
YOU STINKING...
YOU'RE DEAD, TOO!!
TETSUO!
BLAM


EEYAAAA!!


GASP
GASP
GASP

VRRRN
Canon
HE... HE REALLY... HE SHOT ME...
RRRRRRR
KLONG
TETSUO!
REEK
HERE GOES!
foom




PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF

WHA-?!

CHAAARGE!!!
VRRRN
KEEP BACK!
UH--!
KRAK
KRESH
RRRRRR

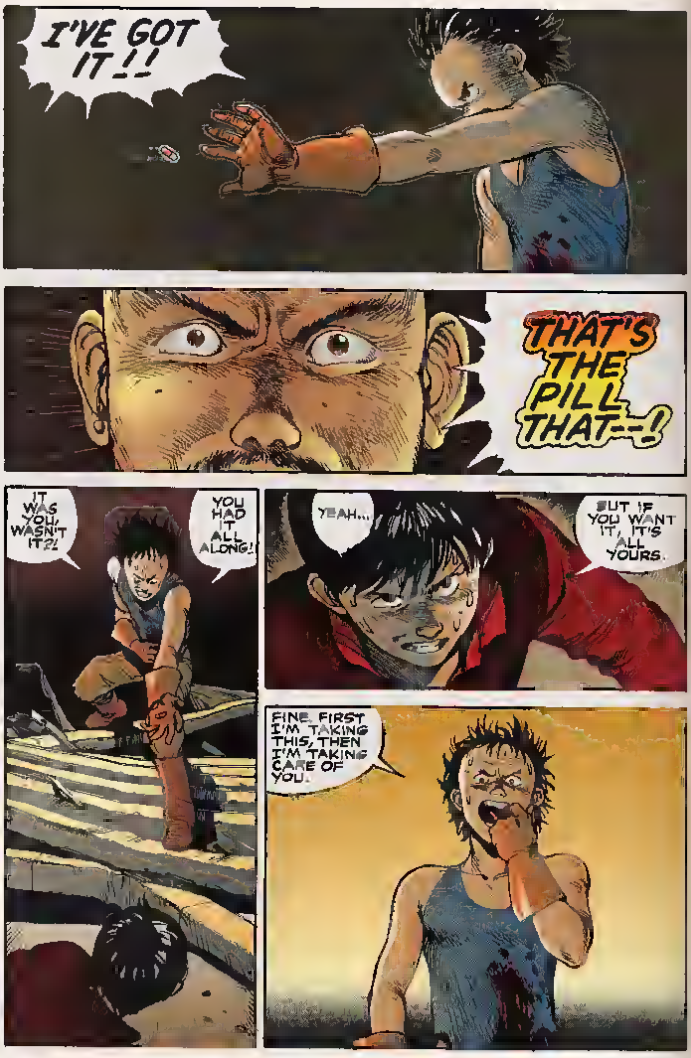
OH,NO!!
CHIK
BAM
!
FWAAAM
DIE, KANEDA!
DIE!!
DIE!!!

FWOOOSSSH
pok
pukkapukkapukka
thwt
fok
THIS GUY'S DEAD
YOU THINK THAT WAS THE LAST OF IT?

UM...
GROSSEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN.
Klat
...MY STOMACH...
...BULLET ...IN... IN MY...
HEYY!!
SWOOSH
...DRUGS ...GOTTA HAVE..

!
YAAAA!!
WUNK
UGK!=
THUD
STOP!!!
HUNH?
YOU--!

!
WHUD
YARGH!
!
NN GH
AH... AH, CRAP!
THAT--
--ISN'T THAT--?
THE DRUG --


I'VE GOT IT!!
THAT'S THE PILL THAT--!
IT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT?!
YOU HAD IT ALL ALONG!
YEAH...
BUT IF YOU WANT IT, IT'S ALL YOURS.
FINE. FIRST I'M TAKING THIS, THEN I'M TAKING CARE OF YOU.

TAKE THAT PILL OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AT ONCE!!
"THAT PILL"...?
IS THAT THE ONE THAT...?
YOU'LL DIE IF YOU SWALLOW IT!
SPIT IT OUT NOW!
gulp

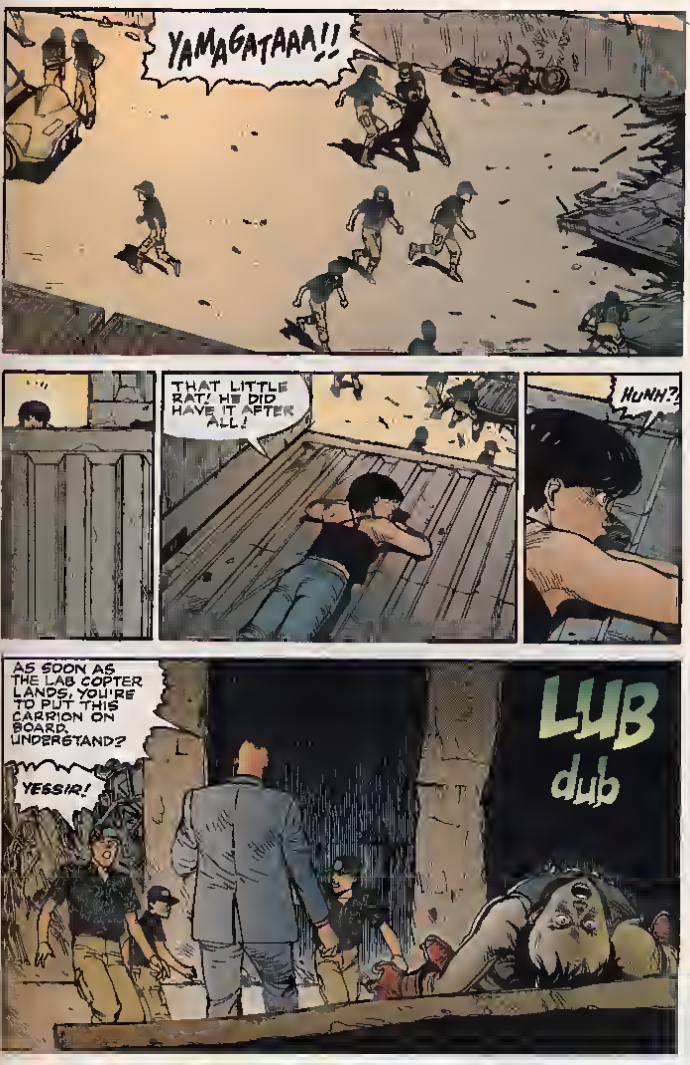
HANG ON! PLEASE HANG ON!
tokka tokka tokka tokka
OH!
YOU'VE GOT TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.
HURRY!
IF YOU DON'T HE'LL--!
LUB dub
OOZE

OOO...
AAU UGH
AAAAGH!
LUB
dub

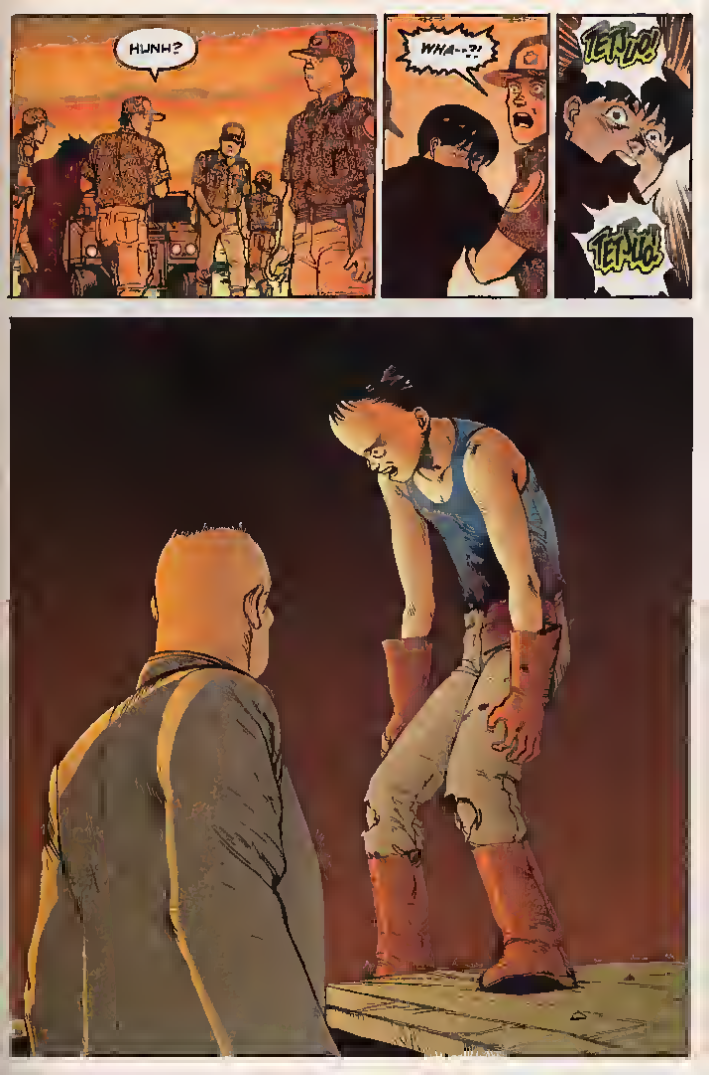
SMAT
LUB dub
DAMN IT--!
lub
WE NEED THE LAB COPTER! AT ONCE!

I HOPE YOU BURN IN HELL!!
...
...FRY YOU... SKINHEAD!
SHUT YOUR INSOLENT MOUTH!
TOO BAD ABOUT THAT PILL. YOU WERE COUNTING ON GETTING IT BACK, HUNH?

JUST WHAT DO YOU KNOW...WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND ABOUT THAT PILL?
ENOUGH SO I'M SORRY IT WENT TO WASTE.
...
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM, SIR?
BRING HIM ALONG.
BUT SEPARATE HIM FROM THE OTHERS.
AND DON'T LET HIS AGE DECEIVE YOU INTO UNDERESTIMATING HIM. HE'S EXCEEDINGLY RESOURCEFUL.


YAMAGATAAA!!
THAT LITTLE RAT! HE DID HAVE IT AFTER ALL!
HUNH?
AS SOON AS THE LAB COPTER LANDS, YOU'RE TO PUT THIS CARRION ON BOARD. UNDERSTAND?
YESSIR!
LUB
dub

EH...?
LUB
dub
WHAAAT...
I'M...IMPOSSIBLE...
...AAA...

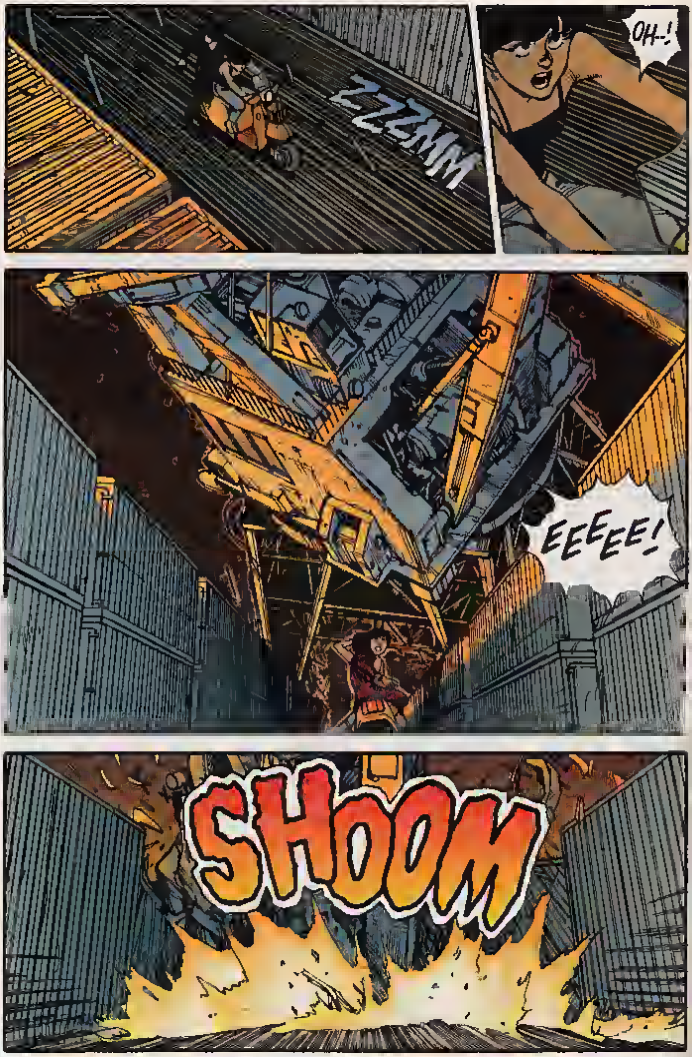

HUNH?
WHA--?!
TET-TO!
TET-TO!

YOU!!!
THEY THREW YOU OUT OF HELL!!
SOK
HEY!
!
HALT!!
STOP HIM!
KA... KANEDA ...
WHA --?
WAI--!
THOM
MOVE!!
YAAGH!!

THE COLONEL!!
YOU LITTLE...
HOLD YOUR FIRE!
!
BWAAM
!!!
NOOO!!
KLUNK
KLUNK

YHHH--!
HUNH?
OVER HERE! HURRY!
KAY!
MOVE!!
KLUNKLUNKLUNK
VRRRRM
NOW JUST HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
STOP!

I SAID
YAHAA!
KLUNKLUNKLUNK
YEEEEK!
ZZZMM
KLUNKLUNKLUNK
VRRRRRR
KANEDAAA!!


ZZZMM
OH-!
EEEEE!
SHOOM

SSHHH
MAN... WHAT A GREAT DRUG FANTASTIC! MY HEADACHE'S TOTALLY GONE
I FEEL LIKE A NEW PERSON.
ARE YOU OKAY? NO FOOLING NOW, GET UP WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!
TOK
!
GOT YOU.

CLEAR OUT!
YOU'RE... YOU'RE TETSUO... AREN'T YOU?
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? KANEDA IS YOUR FRIEND... OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT?!
LOOKS LIKE HE HAS A NEW FRIEND... TO DIE WITH!
TOK
WAIT!
GET LOST!
...RRR...
HAH!
HEAR ME OUT!

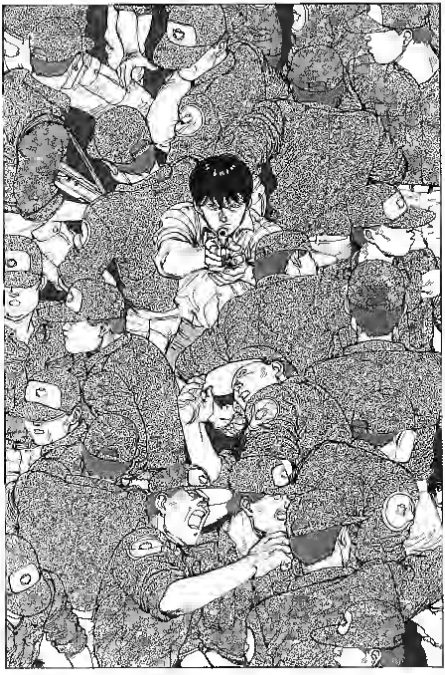
WHY BOTHER WHEN I CAN JUST KILL YOU?
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE WITHDRAWING FROM THE DRUG YOU TOOK?
CONSIDER THE PAIN YOU FACE! CONSIDER WHERE THE DRUG CAME FROM!!
PUFF
PUFF
THINK.. THINK ABOUT IT.
THINK OF HOW MUCH POWER YOU COULD HAVE IF YOU LET US TRAIN YOU!
AND REMEMBER THIS...

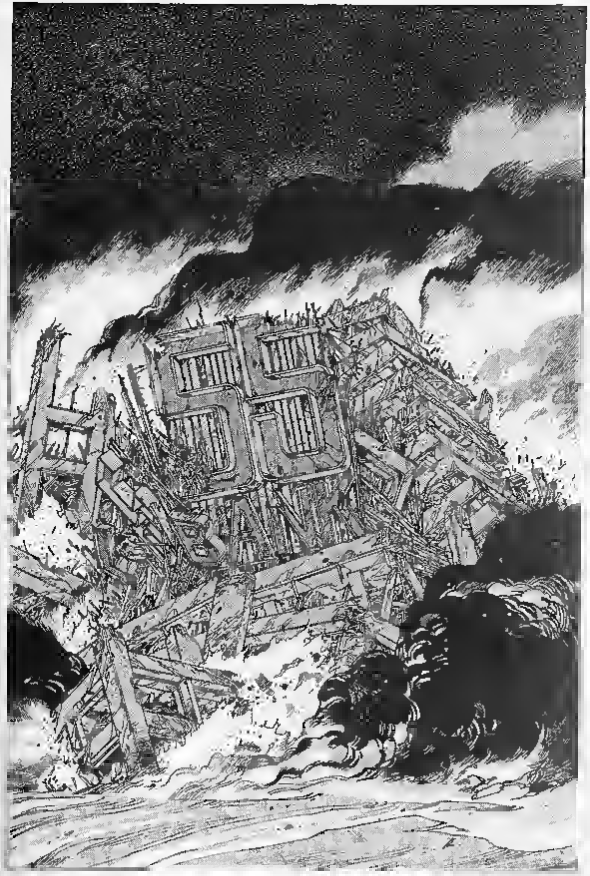
WE DEVELOPED THE PILL, AND THERE ARE MANY MORE WHERE THAT ONE CAME FROM!
IF YOU GO...
...WHERE CAN YOU RUN TO?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.
I... I CAN WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER!
OH, REALLY?
COME WITH ME NOW. ACCEPT WHAT YOU ARE...

NEXT ISSUE: **PLAYERS AND PRISONERS**

OTOMO GALLERY

Katsuhiro Otomo introduced his graphic story saga of *Akira* in the Japanese bi-weekly *Young Magazine* (now weekly), published by Kodansha Ltd. For many of these serialized segments, new title page art was created. Presented here are examples from this work.





Most of these *Young Magazine* pieces will be used in time as color cover art for our Epic edition of *Akira*

Pleased as we are with the results of presenting Mr. Otomo's work in color, we are also second to-none in admiring the strength and design dynamics of his art in black-and-white and are happy to have this space where his material can be shown in a form closer to its original presentation. In the future, along with art that relates to *Akira*, we hope to acquaint our readers with samples of Otomo's other comics and illustration.

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Combat. In the warehouse district of post-World War III Neo-Tokyo, a showdown is taking place. Two young men, once friends, are engaged in a struggle to destroy each other. Kaneda, rebellious gang leader, has a magnum revolver plus his own wit and determination as weapons. Tetsuo, who recently took over the murderous Clown gang, has devastating psychic powers. He has already used them to kill, swiftly, explosively. Fueled by drugs and madness, he is ready to kill again. Hoping to save Kaneda in this unequal clash is Kay, agent of the underground resistance movement. Hoping to win over Tetsuo is the Colonel, head of a secret government project that needs the youth's paranormal power to control a much greater threat on the verge of awakening...AKIRA.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

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